

“Marking a Road to Santa Fe: Set Your Sights on Sibley”

2025 Symposium Presenters

Territory Ballroom 117-119 West Main Street, Council Grove, Kansas

Thursday September 25, 9 a.m.

Steve Schmidt

In 1825, the Federal Government authorized a Commission “to mark out a road from the Western frontier of the state of Missouri in the direction of Santa Fe of New Mexico;” ... and “... cause the marking of the said road to be continued from the boundary line of the United States to the frontier of New Mexico ...” Commissioner George Champlin Sibley emerged as the driving force in accomplishing the task, with Joseph C. Brown being the surveyor. The resulting survey expedition is now known as the Sibley Expedition.

This presentation, containing many visual aids, is a detailed summary of the expedition --- an expedition that took three years to complete; 1825, 1826, and 1827. Discussed will be why and how it came about, where it went, how it was conducted, and what the results were. The presentation will contain a “surprise” ending describing the recent discovery of an artifact directly tied to the expedition.

Over the years, Steve Schmidt has presented several talks and published several articles about the Santa Fe Trail and the Sibley Expedition. He has freely shared his extensive research on the Sibley Expedition with the Santa Fe Trail Association (SFTA) which makes that research available on its website. He and spouse (of 50 years), Glenda, own pastureland in Marion County, KS across which can be seen remnants of the Santa Fe Trail. Their property is known as French Frank’s Trail Segment and is in the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Thursday September 25, 10:30 a.m.

Steven S. Brosemer, P.S.

Steve will intend to show and discuss the equipment and method discussion and at the wagon event, to have participants handle the compass and chains and measure with a chain between two nearby points. Brosemer is now mostly retired, has been in private surveying practice for over forty-five years. He is a 1972 graduate of Wichita State University with a degree in Secondary Education and was authorized to teach Social Studies and Science. After teaching public school for six years, Steve decided to follow in the footsteps of his late father and principal mentor, James H. (Tony) Brosemer, P.S. 82, and became licensed by exam in 1980. The majority of his practice has been in East Central Kansas, although he has surveyed in the Garden City and Hutchinson areas too. Steve has specialized in the retracing the Public Land Survey System of Kansas for the vast majority of his career. He was President of the Kansas Society of Land Surveyors (KSLS) from 1988 to 1989 and has been an elected Director on four occasions. KSLS has bestowed the Life Member Award, three Presidential Citations and two Head Chainman Awards on Steve. The last award was for his work with co-author Norm Bowers on the book, Boundary Surveying in Kansas. The Professional Surveyors Association of

Nebraska also awarded him their Head Chainman Award for the First Guide Meridian East and Sixth P.M. celebrations in 2005 and 2006. Steve has published in Section Lines (KSLs Newsletter) over 90 articles and has been a presenter at many KSLs sponsored seminars since 1982. Steve performed a first-person presentation at the Rendezvous 2012 event as Deputy Surveyor Hawn, circa 1860, at Pawnee Rock. In 2013, he published an article in Wagon Tracks detailing how to use the original government surveys to accurately locate the Santa Fe Trail. Steve was appointed to three terms on the Kansas State Board of Technical Professions (KSBTP) and was their Chair in 2015-2016. Prior to his appointment to that Board, he had been a Complaint Investigator for the KSBTP. Steve has served for many years on the State Specific exam and the Minimum Standards committees of the KSBTP. He has also given back to his community, having served as the Chair of the Emporia Area Chamber of Commerce 2012 and as a longtime member of the Board of Directors of the Lyon County Historical Society.

Friday September 26, 9 a.m.

We Do Not Want a Party of Gentlemen Coffee Drinkers....

The Men of the Sibley Survey Expedition

Craig Crease

The men of the federal government's survey of the Santa Fe Trail in 1825 were a stalwart lot of savvy frontiersmen. They were chosen by survey commissioners George Sibley and Benjamin Reeves for their ability to face hardship expected on the survey, and their experience dealing with the frontier. Several of the men that Sibley and Reeves sought out had already been to Santa Fe. Many of the men were already well-known in the four-year-old State of Missouri. Some went on to become nationally famous and contribute to the vast legacy of the American West. This is the story of the men of the Sibley Survey.

Craig Crease is an investigative historian and award-winning writer on the historic frontier trails and the American West. For over thirty years he was an independent historical consultant for the National Park Service. In 2006 he led a team on the Rediscovery Survey, an environmental impact study of the entire Santa Fe Trail. Crease has served on the executive board of the Kansas City Area Historic Trails Association for several decades. In 2018 he was awarded a financial grant to complete an in-the-field study of the route across Kansas by French officer Bourgmont in 1724, seeking the Padouca Indians. Crease's highly anticipated blockbuster biography of Wild Bill Hickok was published in June 2024, entitled *The Wanderer: James Butler Hickok and the American West*. A native Kansan who spent most of his adult life and career as an insurance agent in the Kansas City metropolitan area, Craig Crease now lives retired in coastal South Carolina.

Friday September 26, 10:30 a.m.

Dr. Elliott West will present on the Sibley survey in 1825, into a larger perspective to give some sense of why it was happening and how it fit into the broader context of the time. In this case he will focus on the 1820s, probably overlapped a bit in either direction. His talk will dive into other government projects and explorations meant to open up U.S. intrusion into the West; the opening and refinement of routes to and especially from Santa Fe farther west to California; economic interests that were fueling all this (fur trade, commerce, Pacific trade); and of course,

Indian relations and how they were affected by all this. He will introduce us to a nice cast of characters, mountain men, army officers, various ne'er do wells, and Boston merchants.

Elliott West grew up in a family of journalists. His father was an editor for the *Daily Morning News*, and his brother was a travel writer. West received an undergraduate degree in journalism at the University of Texas at Austin. West completed master's and doctoral degrees at the University of Colorado. He said that he applied to Colorado because he liked the state, and although he applied to the school's history program, he was still planning to become a journalist. Early in his career, West taught at the University of Colorado Denver, the University of Texas at Arlington, and the University of New Mexico. He became a faculty member at the University of Arkansas in 1979 where he is an Alumni Distinguished Professor of History. Historian Richard White has referred to West as "the best historian of the American West writing today." West's 1998 book, *The Contested Plains: Indians, Goldseekers, and the Rush to Colorado*, was reviewed in the *Journal of Interdisciplinary* and the *Pacific Historical Review*. The work won the 1999 Francis Parkman Review from the Society of American Historians, and shared the Ray Allen Billington Prize from the Organization of American Historians that year. A 2009 book, *The Last Indian War: The Nez Perce Story*, was reviewed in the *Journal of American History*.

In 2009, he was a finalist for the Cherry Award for Great Teaching given by Baylor University. He has received two Western Heritage Awards. He is a past president of the Western Heritage Society. West appeared in the 2023 Ken Burns documentary *The American Buffalo*. West's book *Continental Reckoning: The American West in the Age of Expansion* won the 2024 Bancroft Award and was a finalist for the 2024 Pulitzer Prize for History.